

Brown's syndrome

Other formats

If you need this information in another format such as audio CD, Braille, large print, high contrast, British Sign Language or translated into another language, please contact the PALS desk on 01271 314090 or at ndht.pals@nhs.net.

What is Brown's syndrome?

Brown syndrome means that one eye cannot move upwards properly particularly when looking up and towards the nose.

What causes Brown's syndrome?

There are six muscles for each eye which allow us to turn the eye in all the directions we want to look. In Brown's syndrome, one of the muscles may be too short to turn the eye fully or the muscle may become "stuck" therefore stopping the eye from moving properly.

The affected muscle is called the 'superior oblique'. The superior oblique passes through a ring of cartilage called the 'trochlea' which acts as a natural 'pulley' system in helping the eye to move. In Brown's syndrome, there is a defect to the trochlea or to the muscle itself. The muscle becomes stuck when it does not run smoothly through the trochlea leading the eye to stop moving.

It is usually congenital, present from birth but can also occur as a result of trauma or inflammation.

What are the symptoms?

For most people, Brown's syndrome does not cause any problem with their eyesight. Looking straight ahead or downwards, the eyes usually work together properly as pair with 3D vision. When looking upwards some people may notice double vision (seeing two of things) some of the time. You may lift your chin slightly to compensate for this, most people are unaware they do this.

How is it diagnosed?

It is diagnosed by referral to an orthoptist by your GP, health visitor, school nurse or optician.

How is it treated?

The majority of people with Brown's syndrome require no treatment. Most people have straight eyes, good vision and no symptoms therefore there is no need to intervene.

Sometimes glasses are needed but Brown's syndrome does not increase the chance of needing glasses.

When Brown's syndrome is found in children, they will be monitored in the Orthoptic Department until they are aged 7 to ensure their vision develops normally.

Occasionally a person may have an uncomfortable head position to keep their eyes straight, surgery maybe indicated in these cases however only if the symptoms are severe as the results can be unpredictable.

Usually no treatment is needed. In some children, the problem gets better on its own as they get older.

At school it is good for the teachers to be aware, as a child with Brown's syndrome may find it uncomfortable to look upwards, therefore positioning at the front of the classroom may make board work etc difficult, due to the constant need to look up.

Follow up

Regular follow up will be made in the orthoptic clinic.

Further information

Orthoptic Department, Eye Clinic, North Devon District Hospital
Tel: 01271 322469

Useful website

www.squintclinic.com

PALS

The Patient Advice and Liaison Service (PALS) ensures that the NHS listens to patients, relatives, carers and friends, answers questions and resolves concerns as quickly as possible. If you have a query or concern call 01271 314090 or email ndht.pals@nhs.net. You can also visit the PALS and Information Centre in person at North Devon District Hospital, Barnstaple.

Have your say

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust aims to provide high quality services. However, please tell us when something could be improved. If you have a comment or compliment about a service or treatment, please raise your comments with a member of staff or the PALS team in the first instance.

'Care Opinion' comments forms are on all wards or online at www.careopinion.org.uk.

Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust
Raleigh Park, Barnstaple
Devon EX31 4JB
Tel. 01271 322577
www.northdevonhealth.nhs.uk

© Northern Devon Healthcare NHS Trust
This leaflet was designed by the Communications Department.
Tel: 01271 313970 / email: ndht.contactus@nhs.net